

CRANSTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE PUBLIC WORK SESSION

THURSDAY, JANUARY 16, 2014

WESTERN HILLS MIDDLE SCHOOL

400 PHENIX AVENUE, CRANSTON, RI 02920

PUBLIC WORK SESSION

6:00 P.M. (NOTE SPECIAL TIME)

MINUTES

This School Committee meeting was held on the evening of the above date with the following members present: Chairperson Iannazzi, Mr. Colford, Mrs. Culhane, Mr. Gale, Mrs. McFarland, Mrs. Ruggieri and Mr. Traficante.

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. The roll was called; there was a quorum present.

Public Work Session

A. Discussion on All Day Kindergarten

Dr. Lundsten referred to her handout [see handout #1 District Strategic Plan and Implementation Schedule for Full Day Kindergarten (Operation and Sustainability) on file in the superintendent's office] – which consisted of two line items that

referred to how it may implement an All Day Kindergarten program and has a goal of implementation within 5 years. Dr. Lundsten stated - in the fall we were informed that RIDE was going to issue a proposal for a grant for All Day Kindergarten which would provide funds for all the start-up cost(s). For example carpets, computers, literacy, math units, anything that you could think of that you would need to open a classroom and fully stock the classrooms from the bare walls out was to be provided in the grant. This gave us a heads up because about 3 years ago Mrs. Ruggieri chaired a committee with several kindergarten teachers and other administrators and parents to look at All Day Kindergarten and what we needed to do in order to have a curriculum that was aligned to the common core.

What remains was how we would want to have them staffed.

A grant proposal was sent out to all communities in Rhode Island in late October, early fall. At that point we had a 30 day turnaround time.

Dr. Lundsten continued - I facilitated the writing of the grant with support from almost all Central Administrators, Mr. Rotz, Mr. Dillion, Mrs. Notta-Masse, Joe Balducci, Ray, Michele, and Janice also worked with us on it.

We submitted a proposal to RI Department of Education who issues the grant. At that point and in between I also did some support work.

I researched classrooms space in present elementary classrooms; we then waited for RIDE to get back to us. RIDE did get back to us with some questions.

It is common for RIDE to come back with questions. We responded appropriately to those questions. I received a phone call on the Friday before the holiday break saying we have been allotted \$99,072 for all the supplies, materials, resources. I asked if we could open up as many as 16 classrooms.

They gave us enough money for 4 classrooms. That money does not cover the salaries of the teachers or benefits that go with it because of the new requirements which Michele Simpson did the research on, placing teacher assistants as well in those classrooms. We factored that in. It was our understanding if we were to do this that we would get the Fall Portion of the State Funding for each child. That additional funding would have supported the salaries and benefits for the additional staff that we needed for these classrooms; no matter how many we had; if we had 4 or 10.

Mr. Balducci attended one of his business meetings and heard something at one of those meetings that caught our attention; we needed to do more homework. At that point he reached out to the RIDE finance officials who said “no” we would not get the Fall State Funding because it was a new program. Mr Balducci can elaborate if you have additional questions.

We've been offered a grant, we have not signed for the grant. Ms. Iannazzi would have to sign the grant if we were going to move forward, but we need to talk about whether we want to accept these monies understanding that we are going to have to figure out how to support the salaries of 4 teachers and (4) ½ FTE for teacher assistants and needing to come up with \$250,000. They will partially fund us on the state funding formula to the amount of approximately \$70,000, but we have to come up with the remainder. I will be happy to answer any questions about the process.

Dr. Lundsten continued - our proposal requested 16 classrooms in the first year and then continued to roll out until we were a full district. In the first year we targeted early registration for kindergarten. Our funding was going to be in our current budget cycle because that's the way you get the funding in and that's the reason why there was a lag. Originally when we looked at this we said we couldn't do it because there was a lag between the time we got the funding for the actual students and the implementation. The next decision was to move the registration dates back in order to get the funding in for the current budget year. Our grant proposal was sent to RIDE and clearly stated that the funding that we were going to be looking for was outside of the grant monies for each classroom and would come directly from the Fair Funding Formula.

Mrs. Ruggieri stated - what I can't understand and don't seem to get a

clear answer on is why RIDE would approve our grant knowing this if they also knew that what they were doing with the funding for this new program and actually phasing in the Fair Funding Formula over time. Thus, you're not getting the full funding for each student it is actually phased in. I'm not really sure how we got approved for a grant that was using funding that was not available to us. That's a question I would still really like to have answered.

Mrs. Ruggieri continued - the \$99,072 from the grant is a great start. The \$70,000 for the rest of the payment doesn't even cover the cost of 1 classroom. This forces us to not accept these grant funds. However, I am not giving up on all day kindergarten. My proposal is that we begin to move the 6th grade back to middle schools. I believe that this plan addresses some of the longer term issues in the district that we currently are dealing with students and space and all the other issues that we have. Full day kindergarten will happen in Cranston but the question remains, "when?"

Mr. Traficante asked- Joe I understand about the state not giving us credit for the additional students. How about the city side city funding - would we get credit for those students with it?

Mr. Balducci stated - No, basically any additional funding would have to come from the State. We can, as a district, put in a request on the expenditure side to implement all day kindergarten but that would just increase our appropriation request from the city and then run the

risk if it is not fully funded. However, then we may have an issue on our hands.

Mr. Traficante asked - \$250,000 would have to come from our appropriation from the city in the upcoming budget? Mr. Balducci stated - that is correct.

Mr. Traficante stated - I'm not prepared at this time to accept considering moving the 6th grade back until we examine other options. There are other options so let's check out other options first until we make that move. I'm not against all day kindergarten. I agree we should have it city wide/district wide but let's study it carefully because we don't want to find ourselves in the same situation that we found ourselves in 5 years ago with deficit problems.

Mrs. Ruggieri stated - I wanted to recognize Mr. Zanfini and Ms. Bowen who both were part of the all day kindergarten sub committee. I also want to thank the Cranston Legislative Delegation. Nicholas Mattiello and Chairwoman Gallo have been holding meetings with RIDE in attempt to get RIDE to support our application for all day kindergarten.

Mr. Traficante asked - something about the explosion at the elementary level. Want to explain about the population situation?

Dr. Lundsten stated - obviously we are working on the budget for

next Tuesday night. I've asked Mr. Dillion to roll the numbers up for the elementary classrooms across the district so we can take a look to see what that looked like to see if we can close classroom and I have numbers for you. You'll note already at this time of the year we have classrooms that are at capacity or very close to capacity. If you asked me, "can we manage 4 classroom rooms - yes. Could we manage 16 right now -no. If we see this population trend continue because some of these kids may move. This is not a set number but it does alarm me at this point of the school year that we have this number of kids already enrolled or possibly enrolled. Since winter break, Senator Gallo and House Leader Mattiello have gone above and beyond. We have asked the attorneys to look at the grant language.

Mrs.Culhane stated - I agree with what my colleagues have said. I think that unfortunately we are in another position where we have monies coming but we have to say no. We had a discussion earlier today at the Special Education Sub-committee meeting - what teachers and special education is up against with those kindergarten children with IEP's need to fill that into a 2 ½ hour time slot is virtually impossible but our teachers do it anyway because they can. But they should not have to.

Adjourn Public Work Session

A motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Traficante second by Mrs. McFarland. All were in favor. The meeting adjourned at 6:23 p.m.

Respectfully submitted

Paula McFarland

Clerk

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